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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001535

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, AND AF/SE
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: HASKANITA ATTACK PART OF INCREASED VIOLENCE IN
ADVANCE OF TALKS

REF: A. KHARTOUM 01526
[¶](#)B. KHARTOUM 01439

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Classified By: DCM Roberto Powers, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

[¶](#)1. (SBU) One day after the September 29 attack on the its camp near Haskanita, South Darfur, AMIS evacuated 10 dead and 14 wounded peacekeepers with the help of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Reports abound on the number and identity of the assailants, ranging from two Darfur rebel factions to Arab militias. Violence in the area among rebel movements, Arab tribes, and the Sudanese Government has increased as popular support for the single DPA rebel signatory has collapsed and its command structure deteriorated and as UN/AU-sponsored peace talks loom on the horizon. While international focus shifts from the Sudanese Government to the Darfur rebel movements--either as a result of attacks attributed to the various rebel factions or in response to their outright opposition to, or lukewarm support for, UN/AU-led peace efforts--Sudan may use the opportunity to strengthen its hand both politically and militarily in advance of negotiations scheduled to begin in late October. End summary.

AMIS Dead, Wounded Evacuated

[¶](#)2. (SBU) One day after the September 29 attack on the African Union Mission in Sudan's (AMIS) camp near Haskanita, South Darfur, which left 10 AMIS peacekeepers dead and 14 injured (Ref. A), an AMIS team reached the Military Group Site (MGS) by Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) helicopter on the afternoon of September 30. Force Commander Martin Luther Agwai and six AMIS helicopters later followed and evacuated the dead and wounded to Khartoum and El Fasher. The ten deceased consist of seven AMIS soldiers, two Milobs, and one civilian policeman. Twenty-two personnel remain missing. During a briefing in El Fasher on October 1, Agwai said that the damage to the MGS was more limited than initially reported and that he planned to re-open the site within five days. AMIS placed the neighboring MGSS in Muhajeria and Labado on alert.

¶ 3. (SBU) Agwai referred to the attack as "a wake-up call" that highlighted AMIS' weaknesses. Noting the delay in information dissemination within the force, he said that the operations and intelligence sections needed to coordinate more effectively. Agwai ordered the major staff sections to study the attack and response to formulate lessons learned.

¶ 4. (SBU) S/CRS field officers in Darfur report that AMIS-contracted helicopters had refused to fly into Haskanita until the area was secure. As a result, the SAF had provided a helicopter for the advance team. Agwai acknowledged that the use of SAF aircraft could re-inforce negative impressions of AMIS' association with the Sudanese Government but had weighed that political considerations against the necessity of rescuing the wounded.

Attackers: JEM, SLA/Unity, or Arab?

¶ 5. (SBU) Reports on the number of attackers varies between several hundred and 2,000, and speculation abounds as to the identity of the assailants. The Sudanese Government, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity commanded by Abdullah Yehia have engaged in hostilities in the area since a joint JEM-SLA/Unity attack in Kordofan in late August led to Sudanese reprisals near rebel outposts near Haskanita in early September (Ref. B). Before the September 29 attack, JEM had blamed AMIS for facilitating Government action in the area.

¶ 6. (C) Several credible reports, including from AMIS, indicate that JEM forces had left the area within the last week. While SLA/Unity--one of the strongest military forces among the disparate rebel factions--may have attempted to capitalize on the local population's resentment of AMIS to

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increase its political support in advance of upcoming peace talks in Libya, the brazen nature (and target) of the attack is uncharacteristic. Both JEM and SLA/Unity have denied involvement. Independent Sudanese press have attributed the attack to local Arab militias. Militias from the Maalia tribe have attacked Zaghawa and Rizeigat areas for the last several months. While resulting in few deaths, the attacks have driven the African populations from their villages into the town, according to Western sources in the areas of Haskanita, Muhajerria and Al Daien.

SLM/Minawi's Collapse Increases Vulnerability

¶ 7. (C) The SLM/Minawi had traditionally controlled the area of South Darfur that encompasses Haskanita. This control has deteriorated in recent months, however, as support for the movement and its command structure has collapsed. Western sources in the area have told the Embassy in the last two weeks that "the SLM (Minawi) doesn't even know what's going on" as SLA/Unity and JEM have become the dominant African rebel force on the ground to counter the Arab militias. In late July, Minawi sent a letter to the African Union alluding to this loss of control and warning that the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories posed an imminent threat to AMIS.

Comment

¶ 8. (C) As reported in Ref. B, violence in South Darfur between competing rebel factions and the Sudanese Government is on the rise prior to the UN/AU-sponsored Darfur peace talks scheduled to begin in Libya in late October. As international focus shifts to the Darfur rebel

movements--either as a result of attacks attributed to the various factions or in response to their outright opposition to, or lukewarm support for, the UN/AU process--the Government of Sudan may use the opportunity to strengthen its hand both politically and militarily in advance of the talks.

The international community could counter this trend by defining its expectations for the negotiations. The talks should concentrate on the development of an "implementation protocol" for the DPA that sets out new timelines and strong monitoring mechanisms for the security, power-sharing, and wealth-sharing provisions of the agreement to provide a constructive political outlet for the rebels' grievances and shift some of the political burden for addressing Darfur's instability back onto the Sudanese Government. End comment.

¶9. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
FERNANDEZ